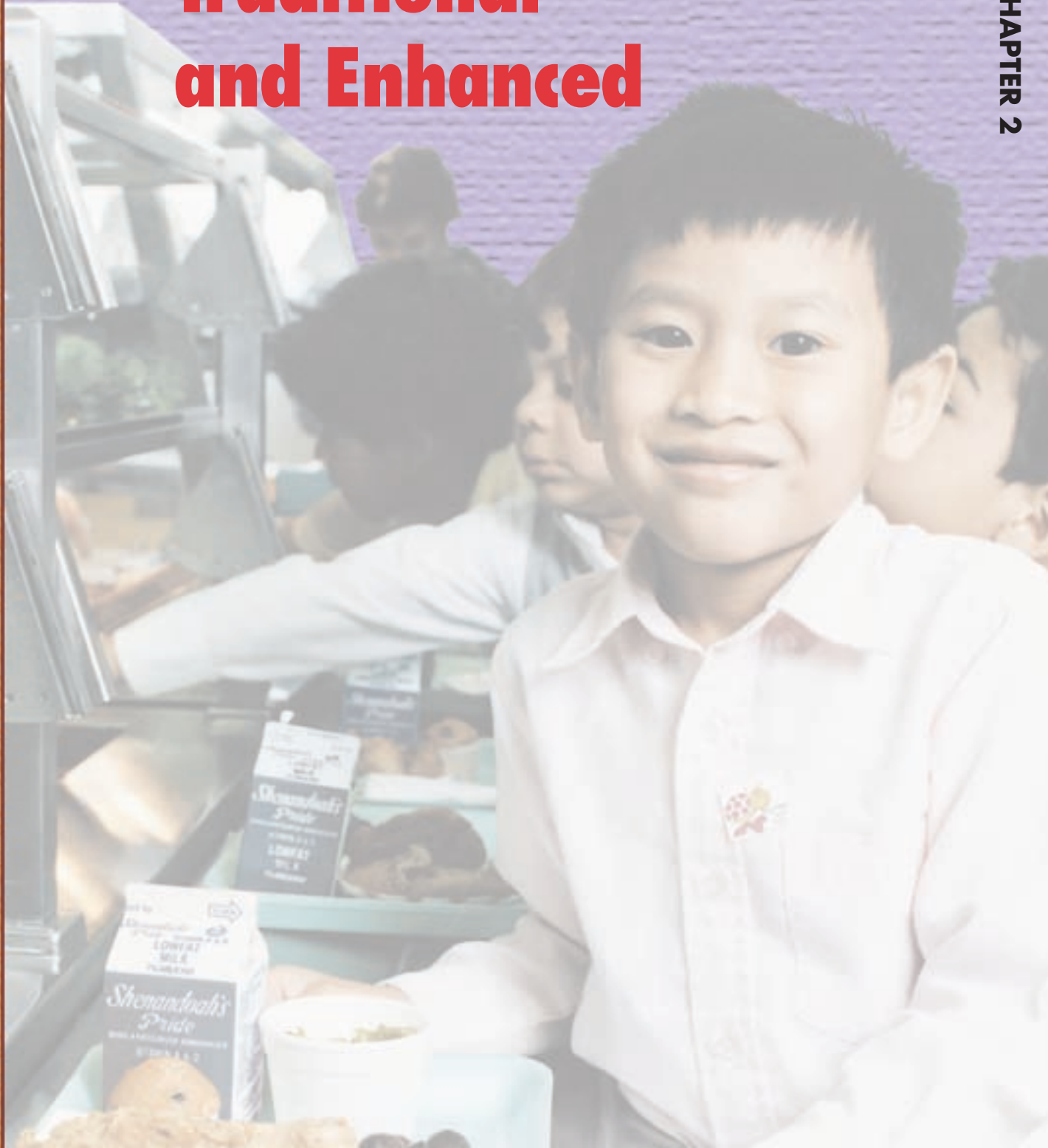


## CHAPTER 2

A MENU PLANNER  
FOR HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS

# Food-Based Menu Planning: Traditional and Enhanced

CHAPTER 2



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## CHAPTER 2 Food-Based Menu Planning: Traditional and Enhanced

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# Food-Based Menu Planning: Traditional and Enhanced

In this chapter, we'll take a closer look at Food-Based Menu Planning — Traditional and Enhanced. As we'll do in Chapter 3 for Nutrient-Based Menu Planning, we will look at the following areas:



- Nutrition Goals
- Nutrient Standards and Age/Grade Groups
- Criteria for a Reimbursable Meal
- Meal Structure for Lunch
- Meal Structure for Breakfast
- Offer versus Serve for Lunch
- Offer versus Serve for Breakfast
- Standardized Recipes
- Processed Foods
- Production Records
- Child Nutrition Labeling

For easy reference, these features are summarized in the chart in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 summarizes these features for Nutrient-Based Menu Planning: Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP) and Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NSMP).

The Traditional and Enhanced plans share the same nutrition goals, but they have different age/grade groups. They also have different meal structures for lunch. You will notice other similarities and differences, too.



***First, an overview:***

Food-Based Menu Planning systems use meal patterns and age/grade groups as planning tools. As we saw in Chapter 1, both Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning require specific food group components be served in specific amounts.

Both use meal patterns that are designed to provide over time: 1/3 of the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) for key nutrients for a specific age/grade group for lunch; and 1/4 of the RDA for key nutrients for breakfast. However, the meal pattern for Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning goes beyond the Traditional meal pattern in significant ways.

In addition to providing 1/3 of RDA for lunch and 1/4 of RDA for breakfast, the Enhanced Food-Based pattern is designed to:

- provide 1/3 of the *calories* needed for specific age/grade groups for lunch
- provide 1/4 of the *calories* needed for specific age/grade groups for breakfast
- help ensure consistency with the Dietary Guidelines

***What does this mean for you in practical terms?***

If you select Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning instead of the Traditional approach, you may have an easier time meeting the nutrition goals outlined in Chapter 1 because the meal patterns for this system have been designed specifically with the nutrition goals in mind.

While you may be able to meet the nutrition goals with Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning, you will need to be extra careful to reach the target goals for key nutrients and calories as well as the recommended levels for fat and saturated fat.

Serving plenty of grains, vegetables, and fruits will be important. So will using lower fat versions of products and preparing foods in ways that get rid of excess fat, such as draining cooked meats and using skinless chicken parts, where possible. You will find a variety of tips like these in Chapters 4 and 6.

In Appendix 3, you will also find helpful information on the 1995 quantity recipes contained in USDA's *A Tool Kit for Healthy School Meals: Recipes and Training Materials*, which has been distributed to schools nationwide. These recipes were prepared specifically with the Dietary Guidelines in mind, and each recipe includes a nutrient analysis. These recipes can be used easily with Traditional or Enhanced Menu Planning or with NSMP and Assisted NSMP.



## 1. Nutrition Goals

### ■ What are the nutrition goals for Food-Based Menu Planning? How will your menus be monitored for compliance with them?

For both Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning, the chart in Appendix 1 states:

*Menus must meet nutrition goals when averaged over a school week and analyzed by the state agency during a state nutrition review.*

In other words, your objective is the same for *both* Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based systems — to plan menus that meet the nutrition goals when averaged over a school week for:

- Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) for key nutrients
- Calories
- Dietary Guidelines

This is the same objective as for NSMP and Assisted NSMP.

### ■ To accomplish this objective, will you need to do a nutrient analysis of menus with Food-Based Planning?

No. You are *not required* to do a nutrient analysis of the menu for either Traditional or Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning.

An analysis will be done by your state agency at the time of the state review. The state will check to see if menus are on track for key nutrients, calories, and the Dietary Guidelines recommendations on fat and saturated fat. During this nutrition assessment, the state agency will need to see production records, nutrient data (such as from manufacturers), and recipes used.

This means that you are not required to use computer hardware or nutrient analysis software. However, you may want to do an analysis — perhaps a computer analysis — for planning purposes and to assess your progress.



To summarize:

- 1) Each meal planned with either the Traditional or Enhanced system must do *both* of the following:

First, it must provide the required number of food components and food items.

Second, it must meet the nutrient standards for the age/grade group you are serving.

- 2) While the four food *components* for lunch are the same for both Traditional and Enhanced systems....

- Meat/Meat Alternates
- Grains/Breads
- Vegetables/Fruits
- Milk

... there are different meal *patterns* for the two systems.

- 3) And, because the Enhanced patterns were designed as part of the *School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children*, they provide required foods in proper portion sizes to meet the nutrition goals.

## 2. Nutrient Standards and Age/Grade Groups

- What are nutrient standards and what is their purpose?  
How do they relate to age/grade groups?

The nutrient standards are an important part of USDA's *School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children*. They were established for all of the menu planning systems by studying the nutritional needs of groups of children of different ages. What exactly are they? Nutrient standards are the required minimum levels of calories and key nutrients to meet the nutrition goals for specific age or grade groups of children for breakfast and lunch menus.

The charts on pages 23 through 26 show the nutrient standards for several age/grade groups — first for lunch, then for breakfast. In each case, the charts show *school week averages* for:

- Calories — also called “Energy Allowances.”
- Five key nutrients — protein, calcium, iron, vitamin A, and vitamin C.
- Total fat — not to exceed 30 percent of calories over a school week.
- Saturated fat — to be less than 10 percent of calories over a school week.

Note that for both total fat and saturated fat, the grams of fat will vary depending on actual level of calories. Also keep in mind that the percent of calories from saturated fat is part of the percent of calories from total fat.



***If You Are Planning LUNCH with the TRADITIONAL Meal Pattern,  
the Required Nutrient Standards\* Are...***

Age/Grade Group:	Preschool	Grades K-3	Grades 4-12	Grades 7-12 Optional
<b>Energy Allowances</b> (Calories = cal.)	517 cal.	633 cal.	785 cal.	825 cal.
<b>Protein</b> (grams = g)	7 g	9 g	15 g	16 g
<b>Calcium</b> (milligrams = mg)	267 mg	267 mg	370 mg	400 mg
<b>Iron</b> (milligrams = mg)	3.3 mg	3.3 mg	4.2 mg	4.5 mg
<b>Vitamin A</b> (Retinol Equivalents = RE)	150 RE	200 RE	285 RE	300 RE
<b>Vitamin C</b> (milligrams = mg)	14 mg	15 mg	17 mg	18 mg
<b>Total fat</b>	No more than 30 percent of total calories should come from fat.			
<b>Saturated fat</b>	Less than 10 percent of total calories should come from saturated fat.			

**Remember these important points:** (1) This chart shows *minimum school week averages* for nutrients except for fat and saturated fat. (2) Fat should not exceed 30 percent of calories over a school week; and *saturated* fat should be less than 10 percent of calories over a school week. In addition, be aware that for both total fat and saturated fat, the grams of fat will vary depending on the calorie level.

**\*NOTE:** These standards may change over time to reflect new nutrition knowledge. As they are updated, USDA will notify your state agency.



***If You Are Planning LUNCH with the ENHANCED Meal Pattern,  
the Required Nutrient Standards\* Are...***

Age/Grade Group:	Preschool	Grades K-6	Grades 7-12	Grades K-3 Optional
<b>Energy Allowances</b> (Calories = cal.)	517 cal.	664 cal.	825 cal.	633 cal.
<b>Protein</b> (grams = g)	7 g	10 g	16 g	9 g
<b>Calcium</b> (milligrams = mg)	267 mg	286 mg	400 mg	267 mg
<b>Iron</b> (milligrams = mg)	3.3 mg	3.5 mg	4.5 mg	3.3 mg
<b>Vitamin A</b> (Retinol Equivalents = RE)	150 RE	224 RE	300 RE	200 RE
<b>Vitamin C</b> (milligrams = mg)	14 mg	15 mg	18 mg	15 mg
<b>Total fat</b>	No more than 30 percent of total calories should come from fat.			
<b>Saturated fat</b>	Less than 10 percent of total calories should come from saturated fat.			

**Remember these important points:** (1) This chart shows *minimum school week averages* for nutrients except for fat and saturated fat. (2) Fat should not exceed 30 percent of calories over a school week; and *saturated* fat should be less than 10 percent of calories over a school week. In addition, be aware that for both total fat and saturated fat, the grams of fat will vary depending on the calorie level.

**\*NOTE:** These standards may change over time to reflect new nutrition knowledge. As they are updated, USDA will notify your state agency.



***If You Are Planning BREAKFAST with the TRADITIONAL Meal Pattern, the Required Nutrient Standards\* Are...***

Age/Grade Group:	Preschool	Grades K-12
<b>Energy Allowances</b> (Calories = cal.)	388 cal.	554 cal.
<b>Protein</b> (grams = g)	5 g	10 g
<b>Calcium</b> (milligrams = mg)	200 mg	257 mg
<b>Iron</b> (milligrams = mg)	2.5 mg	3.0 mg
<b>Vitamin A</b> (Retinol Equivalents = RE)	113 RE	197 RE
<b>Vitamin C</b> (milligrams = mg)	11 mg	13 mg
<b>Total fat</b>	No more than 30 percent of total calories should come from fat.	
<b>Saturated fat</b>	Less than 10 percent of total calories should come from saturated fat.	

**Remember these important points:** (1) This chart shows *minimum school week averages* for nutrients except for fat and saturated fat. (2) Fat should not exceed 30 percent of calories over a school week; and *saturated* fat should be less than 10 percent of calories over a school week. In addition, be aware that for both total fat and saturated fat, the grams of fat will vary depending on the calorie level.

**\*NOTE:** These standards may change over time to reflect new nutrition knowledge. As they are updated, USDA will notify your state agency.



***If You Are Planning BREAKFAST with the ENHANCED Meal Pattern,  
the Required Nutrient Standards\* Are...***

Age/Grade Group:	Preschool	Grades K-12	Grades 7-12 Optional
<b>Energy Allowances</b> (Calories = cal.)	388 cal.	554 cal.	618 cal.
<b>Protein</b> (grams = g)	5 g	10 g	12 g
<b>Calcium</b> (milligrams = mg)	200 mg	257 mg	300 mg
<b>Iron</b> (milligrams = mg)	2.5 mg	3.0 mg	3.4 mg
<b>Vitamin A</b> (Retinol Equivalents = RE)	113 RE	197 RE	225 RE
<b>Vitamin C</b> (milligrams = mg)	11 mg	13 mg	14 mg
<b>Total fat</b>	No more than 30 percent of total calories should come from fat.		
<b>Saturated fat</b>	Less than 10 percent of total calories should come from saturated fat.		

**Remember these important points:** (1) This chart shows *minimum school week averages* for nutrients except for fat and saturated fat. (2) Fat should not exceed 30 percent of calories over a school week; and *saturated* fat should be less than 10 percent of calories over a school week. In addition, be aware that for both total fat and saturated fat, the grams of fat will vary depending on the calorie level.

**\*NOTE:** These standards may change over time to reflect new nutrition knowledge. As they are updated, USDA will notify your state agency.





■ **What are meal patterns? How do they relate to age/grade groups?**

An important step in Food-Based Menu Planning is determining the age/grade group or groups you will be serving and selecting the correct meal pattern(s). A meal pattern is the set of food components and food items and minimum quantities required for a reimbursable meal (lunch or breakfast) for a specific age/grade group.

The age/grade groups are designed to reflect the differing needs of younger and older children while also accommodating the grade structure of the majority of schools. Since not all schools will fall into these grade groups, some schools will need to use more than one grade group.

■ **How many age/grade groups are there for Traditional and Enhanced menu planning? What are they? And how do they differ?**

For school-age students (Grades K-12), both Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning systems use two established age/grade groups for lunch and one established age/grade group for breakfast. However, while there are the same number of age/grade groups for both plans for lunch, the grades are grouped differently.

Similarly, while both Traditional and Enhanced systems offer an additional *optional* age/grade group for lunch, these optional groups are not the same. In addition, the Enhanced system offers an optional age/grade group for breakfast as well as lunch.

Meal patterns for both Traditional and Enhanced systems show the *minimum* amounts you must serve in order to meet the requirements for a particular age/grade group.

■ **What about preschool children?**

Meal patterns for both systems include minimum quantities for two preschool age groups: Ages 1-2 years and Ages 3-4 years.



***For school-age students (Grades K-12), what age/grade groups are used with TRADITIONAL Menu Planning?***

**1) For LUNCHES planned with the Traditional Food-Based system:**

There are *two established* age/grade groups. One is for Grades K-3. The other is for Grades 4-12. There is also an *optional* recommended third age/grade group, for Grades 7-12.

*Does this mean that K-12 schools using the Traditional system MUST use at least two age/grade groups every day?*

USDA *requires* that schools meet the minimum amounts specified in the meal pattern for the appropriate age/grade group. USDA *highly recommends* using at least the two established age/grade groups, as well as the optional third group if possible. This is because the calorie and nutrient needs of children vary by age, gender, size, and activity level.

Some people ask if it is a good idea to streamline planning by using just one age/grade group for all of the children. The answer is no, and here's why: Schools *cannot* use the Grade K-3 pattern for the older children; the food will be insufficient and minimum requirements will not be met.

And, while it is technically *possible* to use the Grade 4-12 pattern for the younger children (since the meal patterns indicate minimum requirements), this is *not* recommended. The food provided by the Grade 4-12 pattern may be excessive for them.

For planning lunches with the Traditional system, it is best to use the two established age/grade groups as well as the recommended (optional) third age/grade group.

**2) For BREAKFASTS planned with the Traditional Food-Based system:**

Schools serving Grades K-12, must use the *one established* age/grade group. This is for Grades K-12.



***For school-age students (Grades K-12), what age/grade groups are used with ENHANCED Menu Planning?***

**1) For LUNCHES planned with the Enhanced Food-Based system:**

Schools serving Grades K-12 use *two established* age/grade groups.

- One is for Grades K-6.
- The other is for Grades 7-12.

There is an additional *optional* age/grade group for Grades K-3. USDA highly recommends using this optional group along with the other two.

**2) For BREAKFASTS planned with the Enhanced Food-Based system:**

Schools serving Grades K-12 must use at least the *one established* age/grade group. This is for Grades K-12.

They may also use an additional *optional* age/grade group for Grades 7-12. This is recommended to meet the increased nutrient needs of the older children.



### 3. Criteria for a Reimbursable Meal

- **With Traditional menu planning, how many food components and food items must a lunch include? How many for breakfast? What about Enhanced menu planning?**

The chart in Appendix 1 uses similar wording here for both Traditional and Enhanced systems. For Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning, it states:

*Provides the required food components and food items in the correct serving sizes to meet the appropriate Traditional meal pattern.*

- *Four food components for lunch.*
- *Five food items for lunch.*
- *Three or four food components for breakfast.*
- *Four food items for breakfast.*

For Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning, the wording is the same with the following exception: the word “Enhanced” (instead of “Traditional”) comes before “meal pattern.”

The wording is different because the two systems use different meal patterns. As we’ve seen earlier, the patterns for the Enhanced system are newer and have been specifically designed to help schools meet the nutrition goals.

On pages 31 through 51, you will find more information on lunch and breakfast requirements for Food-Based Menu Planning — both Traditional and Enhanced. You will also find answers to questions such as:

- How are food items counted for “crediting” under Traditional and Enhanced systems? Is there a difference?
- Do all foods served in a meal, including condiments, count toward meeting the nutrient standards for the meal?
- What kind of adjustments are needed for school weeks that are longer or shorter than the typical 5 days?



#### 4. Meal Structure for Lunch

- What are the minimum requirements — by food component and age/grade group — for lunches planned with the Traditional meal pattern? With the Enhanced meal pattern?
- What do the meal patterns for the Enhanced system look like? How are they different from the Traditional meal patterns?

Both Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning systems require certain food components to be served in certain amounts, depending on the age of the students. For both systems, there are *four* food components for lunch — Meat/Meat Alternate, Grains/Breads, Vegetables/Fruits, and Milk.

However, there are significant differences. As we have already seen, while both systems use age/grade groups, they use *different* groups. Equally important, there are also noticeable differences in number of servings and portion sizes.

On the next several pages, we'll go over the meal structure for both systems. First, we'll list the minimum requirements by age/grade group for each approach. Then we'll look at the meal patterns for each. Finally, we'll look at each of the meal components.

With both Traditional and Enhanced meal patterns, there are daily *and* weekly requirements for some food components. For instance, for a lunch planned with the Enhanced system, the requirement for Vegetables/Fruits for Grades K-6 is  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup per day *plus* an additional  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup over a week. You will see this on the meal pattern on pages 38 and 39.



**For LUNCH with TRADITIONAL FOOD-BASED MENU PLANNING...****What are the minimum requirements by food component and age/grade group for school-age (Grades K-12) students?**

For the TRADITIONAL system, the chart in Appendix 1 shows the following minimum requirements by age/grade group for each of the four components. You will also find these requirements on the meal pattern on pages 34 and 35.

**• Meat/Meat Alternate**

*For the two established age/grade groups:*

Grades K-3: 1-1/2 oz

Grades 4-12: 2 oz

*For the recommended (optional) third age/grade group:*

Grades 7-12: 3 oz

**• Grains/Breads**

*For the two established age/grade groups:*

Grades K-3: 8 servings per week;  
minimum 1 serving per day

Grades 4-12: 8 servings per week;  
minimum 1 serving per day

*For the recommended (optional) third age/grade group:*

Grades 7-12: 10 servings per week;  
minimum 1 serving per day

**• Vegetables/Fruits**

At least two different fruits and/or vegetables must be offered with every lunch.

*For the two established age/grade groups:*

Grades K-3: 1/2 cup per day

Grades 4-12: 3/4 cup per day

*For the recommended (optional) third age/grade group:*

Grades 7-12: 3/4 cup per day

**• Milk**

*For all age/grade groups:*

8 oz fluid milk as a beverage

***If you select Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning, you will use the lunch meal pattern shown on the following two pages. Here are some things to keep in mind:***

**1. The FIVE required food items for a daily lunch are:**

- One serving of Meat/Meat Alternate
- One serving of Grains/Breads
- Two servings of Vegetables (must be two different vegetables), or two servings of Fruits (must be two different fruits), or one of each
- One serving of Milk

**2. For some components, servings are specified by day. For others, servings are specified on a daily and weekly basis.**

**3. Minimum requirements are shown.**

The meal pattern shows the *minimum* number of servings and portion sizes for each of the required food components for lunches planned with the Traditional system. You may increase portion sizes and add additional foods when needed.

**4. Information is given for several different age/grade groups.**

If your schools serve Grades K-12, it is best to use *at least* the two established age/grade groups. These are for Grades K-3 and Grades 4-12. To go even farther in targeting meals to the ages of the children you serve, you may also use the group shown in the last column. This group — for Grades 7-12 — is *recommended* although not required.

Because some schools serve very young children, the meal pattern also shows minimum quantities for children 1- to 2-years-old and preschoolers (children older than 2 years). USDA has not set nutrient standards for the 1- to 2-year-old group.

**See pages 40 through 44 for more information on food components for lunch, including information on two “alternate” foods that may count as part of the Meat/Meat Alternate.**

**See Appendix 4 for more information on meeting the Grains/Breads requirement.**



## MEAL PATTERN FOR LUNCH — TRADITIONAL FOOD-BASED MENU PLANNING

### • MEAT OR MEAT ALTERNATE:

Per day serve one of the following food items or a combination of these items to provide at least the quantity listed. The quantities shown are the *edible* portion as served.

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Ages 3-4 yrs	Grades K-3	Grades 4-12	Grades 7-12*
Lean meat, poultry, or fish	1 oz	1-1/2 oz	1-1/2 oz	2 oz	3 oz
Cheese	1 oz	1-1/2 oz	1-1/2 oz	2 oz	3 oz
Large egg	1/2	3/4	3/4	1	1-1/2
Cooked dry beans or peas	1/4 cup	3/8 cup	3/8 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
Peanut butter or other nut or seed butters	2 Tbsp	3 Tbsp	3 Tbsp	4 Tbsp	6 Tbsp
Yogurt	4 oz or 1/2 cup	6 oz or 3/4 cup	6 oz or 3/4 cup	8 oz or 1 cup	12 oz or 1-1/2 cup

The following foods may be used to meet *part* of the Meat/Meat Alternate as explained below.

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Ages 3-4 yrs	Grades K-3	Grades 4-12	Grades 7-12*
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds**	1/2 oz = 50 %	3/4 oz = 50%	3/4 oz = 50%	1 oz = 50%	1-1/2 oz = 50%

Explanation: \*\* These foods may be used to meet *no more than* 50% of this requirement. In addition, they must be used *in combination* with one or more of the other meat/meat alternates listed above.

\* **Grades 7-12:** This is an optional age/grade group. USDA recommends using it along with the others.



### • GRAINS/BREADS:

Must be enriched or whole grain or contain germ or bran.

A serving is...

A slice of bread or an equivalent serving of biscuits, rolls, etc.,

OR 1/2 cup of cooked rice, macaroni, noodles, other pasta products,  
or cereal grains.

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Ages 3-4 yrs	Grades K-3	Grades 4-12	Grades 7-12*
Minimum per WEEK:	5 serv	8 serv	8 serv	8 serv	10 serv
Minimum per DAY:	1/2 serv	1 serv	1 serv	1 serv	1 serv

### • VEGETABLES/FRUITS:

At least two different vegetables and/or fruits must be offered.

Minimum requirements per day...

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Ages 3-4 yrs	Grades K-3	Grades 4-12	Grades 7-12*
	1/2 c	1/2 c	1/2 c	3/4 c	3/4 c

### • MILK (Fluid):

Must be served as a beverage.

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Ages 3-4 yrs	Grades K-3	Grades 4-12	Grades 7-12*
Per day:	6 fl oz	6 fl oz	8 fl oz	8 fl oz	8 fl oz

\* *Grades 7-12:* This is an optional additional age/grade group. USDA recommends using it along with the others.



**For LUNCH with ENHANCED FOOD-BASED MENU PLANNING...****What are the minimum requirements by food component and age/grade group for school-age (Grades K-12) students?**

For the ENHANCED system, the chart in Appendix 1 shows the following minimum requirements for each of the four components. You will also find these on the meal pattern on pages 38 and 39.

**• Meat/Meat Alternate**

*For the two established age/grade groups:*

Grades K-6: 2 oz

Grades 7-12: 2 oz

*For the optional third age/grade group:*

Grades K-3: 1-1/2 oz

**• Grains/Breads**

*For the two established age/grade groups:*

Grades K-6: 12 servings per week;  
minimum 1 serving per day

Grades 7-12: 15 servings per week;  
minimum 1 serving per day

*For the optional third age/grade group:*

Grades K-3: 10 servings per week;  
minimum 1 serving per day

**• Vegetables/Fruits**

At least two different fruits and/or vegetables must be offered with every lunch.

*For the two established age/grade groups:*

Grades K-6: 3/4 cup per day  
plus additional 1/2 cup per week

Grades 7-12: 1 cup per day

*For the optional third age/grade group:*

Grades K-3: 3/4 cup per day

**• Milk**

*For all age/grade groups:*

8 oz fluid milk as a beverage

***If you select Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning, you will use the lunch meal pattern shown on the following two pages. Here are some things to keep in mind:***

**1. The FIVE required food items for a daily lunch are:**

- One serving of Meat/Meat Alternate
- One serving of Grains/Breads
- Two servings of Vegetables (must be two different vegetables), OR two servings of Fruits (must be two different fruits), OR one serving of each
- One serving of Milk

**2. For some components, servings are specified by day. For others, servings are specified on a daily *and* weekly basis.**

**3. Minimum requirements are shown.**

The meal pattern shows the *minimum* number of servings and portion sizes for each of the required food components for lunches planned with the Enhanced system.

**4. Information is given for several different age/grade groups. The two established grade groups for the Enhanced lunch pattern are Grades K-6 and 7-12.**

If your schools serve Grades K-12, you must use at least the *two* established age/grade groups shown in columns 3 and 4 — these are for Grades K-6 and Grades 7-12. To go even farther in targeting meals to the ages of the children you serve, you may also use the optional third group shown in column 5 — for Grades K-3.

Because some schools serve very young children, the meal pattern also shows minimum quantities for children 1- to 2-years-old and preschoolers (children older than 2 years). USDA has not set nutrient standards for the 1- to 2-year-old group.

**5. For the purposes of this chart, a week equals 5 days.**

As you plan meals, you will need to incorporate weekly minimum servings of certain food items in addition to minimum daily servings. The meal pattern is based on a week of 5 consecutive days. If you are planning menus for a school week that is longer or shorter than 5 days, you will need to adjust accordingly. (See note in Grains/Breads section of the meal pattern.)

For programs that serve meals for more than 5 days per week or less than 5 days per week, the additional or reduced quantities should be prorated over the actual number of serving days.

**See pages 40 through 44 for more information on food components for lunch, including information on two “alternate” foods that may count as part of the Meat/Meat Alternate.**

**See Appendix 4 for more information on meeting the Grains/Breads requirement.**



## MEAL PATTERN FOR LUNCH — ENHANCED FOOD-BASED MENU PLANNING

### • MEAT OR MEAT ALTERNATE:

Per day serve one of the following food items or a combination of these items to provide at least the quantity listed. The quantities shown are the *edible* portion as served.

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Pre- school	Grades K-6	Grades 7-12	Grades K-3*
Lean meat, poultry, or fish	1 oz	1-1/2 oz	2 oz	2 oz	1-1/2 oz
Cheese	1 oz	1-1/2 oz	2 oz	2 oz	1-1/2 oz
Large egg	1/2	3/4	1	1	3/4
Cooked dry beans or peas	1/4 cup	3/8 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/8 cup
Peanut butter or other nut or seed butters	2 Tbsp	3 Tbsp	4 Tbsp	4 Tbsp	3 Tbsp
Yogurt	4 oz or 1/2 cup	6 oz or 3/4 cup	8 oz or 1 cup	8 oz or 1 cup	6 oz or 3/4 cup

The following foods may be used to meet *part* of the Meat/Meat Alternate as explained below.

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Pre- school	Grades K-6	Grades 7-12	Grades K-3*
Peanuts, soynuts, tree nuts, or seeds**	1/2 oz= 50%	3/4 oz= 50%	1 oz= 50%	1 oz= 50%	3/4 oz= 50%

\*\* These foods may be used to meet *no more than* 50% of this requirement. In addition, they must be used *in combination* with one or more of the other meat/meat alternates listed above.

\* **Grades K-3:** This is an optional age/grade group. USDA recommends using it along with the others.



## • GRAINS/BREADS:

Must be enriched or whole grain or contain germ or bran.

A serving is...

A slice of bread or an equivalent serving of biscuits, rolls, etc.,

OR 1/2 cup of cooked rice, macaroni, noodles, other pasta products,  
or cereal grains.

Up to one serving per day may be a grain-based dessert. (This applies only to Grades K-12, not to Ages 1-2 and Preschool.)

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Pre- school	Grades K-6	Grades 7-12	Grades K-3*
Minimum per WEEK:	5 serv	8 serv	12 serv	15 serv	10 serv
Minimum per DAY:	1/2 serv	1 serv	1 serv	1 serv	1 serv

In this chart, a week equals 5 days. If there are 7 days in the week, increase servings of Grains/Breads per week by:

- 5 servings for Grades K-6 to a total of 17 servings
- 6 servings for Grades 7-12 to a total of 21 servings

If the week has 3 days, decrease servings per week by:

- 5 servings for Grades K-6 to a total of 7 servings
- 6 servings for Grades 7-12 to a total of 9 servings

Increasing the number of servings of Grains/Breads is critical to the success of meeting the calorie requirements and implementing the Dietary Guidelines recommendations for dietary fiber.

## • VEGETABLES/FRUITS:

At least two different vegetables and/or fruits must be offered.

Minimum requirements per day:

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Pre- school	Grades K-6	Grades 7-12	Grades K-3*
	1/2 c	1/2 c	3/4 c**	1 c	3/4 c
			** plus an extra 1/2 cup over a week		

## • MILK (Fluid):

Must be served as a beverage.

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Pre- school	Grades K-6	Grades 7-12	Grades K-3*
Per day:	6 fl oz	6 fl oz	8 fl oz	8 fl oz	8 fl oz

\* Grades K-3: This is an optional age/grade group. USDA recommends using it along with the others.



## More Information on Food Components for Lunch

The meal patterns on pages 33 through 39 show you what lunch looks like — first with Traditional Menu Planning, then with Enhanced. Here are more specifics on what is required for each of the four food components.

The requirements outlined here are the same for both Traditional and Enhanced systems. They are *not* about quantities, except for a few instances where minimum serving sizes are given. For information on required quantities — which are different for the Traditional and Enhanced systems — see the meal patterns.

### Lunch - Meat/Meat Alternate Requirements:

- The serving of Meat/Meat Alternate may be contained only in the main dish plus one other menu item.
- Dry beans and peas may count as a Vegetable or as a Meat Alternate, but not as both in the same meal.
- A serving of cooked meat is lean meat without the bone.
- A serving of cooked fresh or frozen chicken or turkey includes meat and skin as normally served.
- Two “alternate” foods may count as part of the Meat/Meat Alternate as long as they are used according to USDA directions. These foods are: *vegetable protein products* and *enriched macaroni products with fortified protein*.

### Lunch - Grains/Breads Requirements:

- Provide the required number of servings per day and per week.
- The minimum allowable serving size that may count toward meeting the required serving is 1/4 of a serving.
- The item must be whole-grain or enriched or made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour, or bran or germ; or if it is a cereal, the product must be whole-grain, enriched, or fortified.
- If it is enriched, the item must meet the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s Standards of Identity for enriched bread, macaroni and noodle products, rice, or cornmeal.



### ***What foods qualify as Grains/Breads for lunch?***

To qualify as Grains/Breads for school lunches, foods must be enriched or whole-grain or made from enriched or whole-grain meal or flour. Bran and germ are credited the same as enriched or whole-grain meal or flour. Such foods include, but are not limited to:

- *Breads* that are enriched or whole-grain.
- *Biscuits, bagels, rolls, tortillas, muffins, or crackers* made with enriched or whole-grain meal or flour.
- *Cereal grains (cooked) such as rice, bulgur, oatmeal, corn grits, wheat or couscous* that are enriched, whole-grain, or fortified.
- *Ready-to-eat breakfast cereals* that are enriched, whole-grain, or fortified.
- *Cereals or bread products that are used as an ingredient in another menu item* such as crispy rice treats, oatmeal cookies, or breading on fish or poultry when they are enriched, whole-grain, or fortified.
- *Macaroni or noodle products (cooked)* made with enriched or whole-grain flour. Macaroni products that have been fortified with protein may be counted to meet either a Grains/Breads or Meat/Meat Alternate requirement for lunch but not for both in the same meal.
- *Sweet foods such as toaster pastries, coffee cake, doughnuts, sweet rolls, cookies, cakes or formulated grain-fruit products* when made with enriched or whole-grain meal or flour and served as permitted under Exhibit A shown in Appendix 4.
- *Pie crust* when made with enriched or whole-grain meal or flour and served as permitted under Exhibit A in Appendix 4.
- *Non-sweet snack products such as hard pretzels, hard bread sticks, and chips* made from enriched or whole-grain meal or flour.



For additional information on the criteria for determining acceptable Grains/Breads and the minimum weight of a serving, see Appendix 4.

**Lunch - Vegetables/Fruits Requirements:**

- At least two different vegetables and/or fruits must be offered.
- Full-strength vegetable or fruit juice may be used to meet no more than 1/2 of the total requirement for lunch for Vegetables/Fruits.
- Fruit and vegetable concentrates can be used in either diluted or concentrated form.
- Dry beans and peas may count as a Vegetable or as a Meat Alternate, but not as both in the same meal.
- A serving of canned fruit may include the juice or syrup in which the fruit is packed unless otherwise indicated in USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*.
- A serving of thawed frozen fruit is the fruit plus the juice that accumulated during thawing.
- 1/8 cup of a vegetable or fruit is the minimum serving size which can be:  
(a) counted toward the required total servings and (b) counted as one of the two different Vegetables/Fruits.

**Lunch - Milk Requirements:**

- Provide one serving.
- Section 107 of Public Law 103-448 modified the statutory requirement to offer fluid whole milk and fluid unflavored lowfat milk for lunch. Schools are now required to offer a variety of fluid milk consistent with children's preferences in the prior year. Records of the past year's purchase orders will serve as a guide to what variety of milk should be offered.
- If a specific type of milk represents less than 1 percent of the total amount of milk consumed in the previous year, the school may elect not to offer that type of milk for lunch.



### ***Counting food items for lunch...***

#### **What food items can be counted as meeting meal pattern requirements for lunch with Food-Based Menu Planning?**

In the Child Nutrition Programs, the word “credit” is used to acknowledge that a particular food meets the requirements of one of the four required food components.

Only items which contain foods that can be *credited* as one of the five food items for lunch can be counted as meeting the meal pattern requirements.

For example, a typical chocolate pudding would *not* count as one of the food items for lunch. It does not contain a food that can be credited as one of the five food items. Although chocolate pudding may contain milk, the milk requirement can only be met by serving fluid milk as a beverage.

Under Enhanced Menu Planning, a chocolate bread pudding MAY count as a grain-based dessert if it contains the required amount of bread to qualify for a serving of Grains/Breads. In contrast, with the Traditional Food-Based system, the chocolate bread pudding served as dessert would not count toward the Grains/Bread requirement.

For more information on crediting of foods, see the Grains/Breads Instruction in Appendix 4. Also see USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*.



## 5. Meal Structure for Breakfast

- What are the minimum requirements for breakfast? Is the meal structure the same for both the Traditional and Enhanced systems? What does the breakfast meal pattern look like?

The chart in Appendix 1 shows *no* difference in the meal structure for breakfasts planned with the Traditional and Enhanced systems. However, there is one difference in age/grade groups used — with the Enhanced system, there is an *optional* second age/grade group for Grades 7-12.

**For breakfast with both the Traditional and Enhanced systems, Appendix 1 shows the following servings for school-age students (Grades K-12):**

- **Meat/Meat Alternate AND/OR Grains/Breads**

*For the one established age/grade group...*

Grades K-12: Two servings of  
Meat/Meat Alternate  
OR two servings  
of Grains/Breads  
OR one serving of each

- **Juice/Fruit/Vegetable**

*For the one established age/grade group...*

Grades K-12: 1/2 cup

- **Milk**

*For all age/grade groups:*

8 oz fluid milk as a beverage OR on cereal  
OR both

**If you are using the optional extra age/grade group for the Enhanced system (Grades 7-12), you will need to serve one additional serving of Grains/Breads.**



***If you select Food-Based Menu Planning — Traditional or Enhanced — you will use the breakfast meal pattern shown on pages 46 and 47. Here are some things to keep in mind:***

**1. The FOUR required food items for a daily breakfast are:**

- Two servings of Grains/Breads or two servings of Meat/Meat Alternate or one serving of each
- One serving of Milk
- One serving of Juice/Fruit/Vegetable

**2. The number of food items for breakfast is a *daily* criteria.**

The meal pattern specifies a minimum number and size of servings *per day* for each food item required.

**3. Minimum requirements are shown.**

The meal pattern shows the *minimum* number of servings and portion sizes for each of the required food components.

**4. Information is given for several different age/grade groups.**

As you can see, information is given for several different age/grade groups. Schools serving K-12 must use at least the one established age/grade group shown in column 3 — this is for Grades K-12. In addition, to better target the needs of children, K-12 schools using the Enhanced system may *also* use the optional group shown in column 4 — for Grades 7-12.

Because some schools serve very young children, the meal pattern also shows minimum quantities for preschoolers as well as for children 1- to 2-years-old. USDA has not set nutrient standards for the 1- to 2-year-old group.

**See pages 48 through 51 for more information on food components for breakfast.**

**See Appendix 4 for more information on meeting the Grains/Breads requirement.**



## MEAL PATTERN FOR BREAKFAST — TRADITIONAL or ENHANCED FOOD-BASED MENU PLANNING

### • GRAINS/BREADS - and/or - MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATES:

Select ONE serving from EACH of these components to equal:

one GRAINS/BREADS  
- and -  
one MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATE

OR select TWO servings from ONE of these components to equal:

two GRAINS/BREADS  
- or -  
two MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATES

- If you are using the optional extra age/grade group for the Enhanced system (Grades 7-12), serve one additional serving of Grains/Breads.

### GRAINS/BREADS:

You can serve one of the following food items or combine them to meet the requirements.

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Pre- school	Grades K-12	Grades 7-12*
(a) Whole-grain or enriched bread	1/2 serv	1/2 serv	1 serv	1 serv
(b) Whole-grain or enriched biscuit, roll, muffin, etc.	1/2 serv	1/2 serv	1 serv	1 serv
(c) Whole-grain, enriched, or for- tified cereal	1/4 c or 1/3 oz	1/3 c or 1/2 oz	3/4 c or 1 oz	3/4 c or 1 oz

\* Optional extra age/grade group for the Enhanced system.  
Recommended but not required.

**MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATE:**

You can serve one of the following food items or combine them to meet the requirements.

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Pre- school	Grades K-12	Grades 7-12*
Meat, poultry, or fish	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz	1 oz
Cheese	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz	1 oz
Egg (large)	1/2 egg	1/2 egg	1/2 egg	1/2 egg
Peanut butter or other nut or seed butters	1 Tbsp	1 Tbsp	2 Tbsp	2 Tbsp
Cooked dry beans or peas	2 Tbsp	2 Tbsp	4 Tbsp	4 Tbsp
Yogurt	2 oz or 1/4 cup	2 oz or 1/4 cup	4 oz or 1/2 cup	4 oz or 1/2 cup
Nuts and/or seeds (see note below)**	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz	1 oz

\*\* No more than 1 oz of nuts and/or seeds may be served in any one meal.

**• MILK (Fluid):**

As a beverage or on cereal, or both.

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Pre- school	Grades K-12	Grades 7-12*
	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	8 fl oz	8 fl oz

**• JUICE/FRUIT/VEGETABLE:**

Include a minimum of one serving. You can serve a fruit or vegetable or both; or full-strength fruit or vegetable juice.

	Ages 1-2 yrs	Pre- school	Grades K-12	Grades 7-12*
	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup

\* Optional extra age/grade group for the Enhanced system.  
Recommended but not required.



## More Information on Food Components for Breakfast

By studying the meal pattern on pages 46 and 47, you can get a good idea of what a breakfast must include. However, you will also need to know the following:

### Breakfast - Grains/Breads Requirements:

The meal pattern for a breakfast calls for a minimum of two servings of Grains/Breads OR two servings of Meat/Meat Alternate, OR one serving of each.

*For Grains/Breads:*

- The item must be whole-grain or enriched or made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour, or bran or germ; or if it is a cereal, the product must be whole-grain, enriched, or fortified.
- If it is enriched, the item must meet the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Standards of Identity for enriched bread, macaroni and noodle products, rice, or cornmeal.
- The minimum allowable serving size that can count toward meeting the required serving is 1/4 of a serving.

It is important to note that Grains/Breads components must either: (1) meet the quantities specified in USDA's Grains/Breads Instruction; or (2) provide the minimum required quantity of enriched flour/whole grain in each serving. (See Appendix 4.)



Shown here is Granola from USDA's *A Tool Kit for Healthy School Meals: Recipes and Training Materials*. The tool kit includes many exciting breakfast and lunch recipes. See Appendix 3 for more information.

***What foods qualify as Grains/Breads for breakfast?***

To qualify as Grains/Breads for school breakfasts, foods must be enriched or whole-grain or made from enriched or whole-grain meal or flour. Bran and germ are credited the same as enriched or whole-grain meal or flour. Such foods include, but are not limited to:

- *Breads* that are enriched or whole-grain.
- *Biscuits, bagels, rolls, tortillas, muffins, or crackers* made with enriched or whole-grain meal or flour.
- *Cereal grains (cooked) such as rice, bulgur, oatmeal, corn grits, wheat or couscous* that are enriched, whole-grain, or fortified.
- *Ready-to-eat breakfast cereals* that are enriched, whole-grain, or fortified.
- *Cereals or bread products that are used as an ingredient in another menu item* such as crispy rice treats, oatmeal muffins, or breading on French toast sticks when they are enriched, whole-grain, or fortified.
- *Macaroni or noodle products (cooked)* made with enriched or whole-grain flour.
- *Sweet foods such as toaster pastries, coffee cake, doughnuts, sweet rolls, cookies, cakes or formulated grain-fruit products* when made with enriched or whole-grain meal or flour and served as permitted under Exhibit A shown in Appendix 4.
- *Pie crust* when made with enriched or whole-grain meal or flour and served as permitted under Exhibit A shown in Appendix 4.
- *Non-sweet snack products such as hard pretzels, hard bread sticks, and chips* made from enriched or whole-grain meal or flour.

For additional information on the criteria for determining acceptable Grains/Breads and the minimum weight of a serving, see Appendix 4.



**Breakfast - Meat/Meat Alternate Requirements:**

The meal pattern calls for a minimum of two servings of Meat/Meat Alternate OR two servings of Grains/Breads OR one of each.

*For Meat/Meat Alternate:*

- No more than 1 ounce of nuts and/or seeds may be credited in any one meal.
- Dry beans and peas used in items such as a breakfast burrito may count as a Vegetable or Meat Alternate but not as both in the same meal.

**Breakfast - Juice/Fruit/Vegetable Requirements:**

The meal pattern calls for a minimum of one serving.

- The minimum amount that can count toward meeting the total required servings is 1/8 cup.
- If juice is served to meet the total requirement, it must be full-strength.
- Dry beans and peas used in an item such as a breakfast burrito may count as a Vegetable or as a Meat Alternate, but not as both in the same meal.
- A serving of canned fruit may include the juice or syrup in which the fruit is packed unless otherwise indicated in USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*.
- A serving of thawed frozen fruit is fruit plus the juice that accumulated during thawing.

*NOTE: For lunch, full-strength juice can meet only one-half of the Fruit/Vegetable requirement. But for breakfast, full-strength juice can meet the full requirement.*



***Counting food items for breakfast...*****What food items can be counted as meeting meal pattern requirements for breakfast with Food-Based Menu Planning?**

As we've seen earlier with lunch, in the Child Nutrition Programs the word "credit" is used to acknowledge that a particular food meets the requirements of one of the required food components. Only items which contain foods that can be *credited* as one of the four food items for breakfast can be counted as meeting the meal pattern requirements.

For example, a cereal bar *MAY* count as one of the food items for breakfast if it contains the required amount of enriched cereal to qualify for a serving of a ready-to-eat breakfast cereal as a Grains/Breads food item.

A 1/4 serving of Grains/Breads is the minimum amount that may be counted toward the required servings.

For more information on crediting of foods, see the Grains/Breads Instruction in Appendix 4. Also see USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*.



## 6. Offer versus Serve for Lunch

- **Have the goals of Offer versus Serve (OVS) changed as a result of the *School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children*? Are OVS regulations the same for Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning?**

Offer versus Serve (OVS) allows students to decline a certain number of food items in the meal. The original goals of OVS were to minimize plate waste and encourage schools to offer more food choices. These goals have not changed.

Similarly, OVS regulations have not changed for meals planned with Food-Based Menu Planning. The regulations are the same for both Traditional and Enhanced systems.

Are all schools required to have Offer versus Serve as part of their lunch programs? No. Only senior high schools are required to have OVS for lunch. Local school food authorities can choose whether or not they want to have OVS for their junior high, middle, and elementary schools. For details on how Offer versus Serve works, see page 53 and Appendix 5.



### **Does OVS accomplish the goals of reducing plate waste and encouraging more food choices?**

Many school food service managers say that students do, in fact, consume more food when they are not required to take the full reimbursable meal. The reason, they say, is simple: students like having choices and they are more likely to eat food items they choose themselves.

Because the meal price is the same whether or not they decline some items, many students realize they get more for their money if they take and eat the full reimbursable meal.



***Here's how OVS works for lunch with Food-Based Menu Planning:***

- Students must be offered all five required items: one serving each of Meat/Meat Alternate, Milk, Grains/Breads; and two servings of Vegetables/Fruits.
- Students have the option of which item(s) to decline.
- Senior high school students are allowed to decline two of the five required food items.
- Students in junior high, middle, and elementary schools may be permitted to decline one or two of the five required food items. Local school food authorities decide whether their students may decline as many as two items, or only one.
- Students are allowed to take smaller portions of the *declined* food items. The required food items taken by the student, however, must each be a full serving.
- Serving sizes must be at least equal to the minimum required quantities by age or grade group.
- The lunch must be priced as a unit. In other words, a student's decision to decline the allowed number of food items (or to accept smaller portions of otherwise declined food items) does not affect the charge for the meal.
- For an OVS meal to qualify as reimbursable, it must contain certain combinations of foods. Menu planners need to make sure cashiers and students can identify at the "point of service" which combinations of food items qualify as a reimbursable meal.

For Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning, this information is summarized as follows in Appendix 1:

- *Required for senior high schools.*
- *High school students must take no fewer than three of the required five food items. They get to choose which item(s) to decline.*
- *Optional for lower grades. (School food authorities decide whether to have OVS.)*

Appendix 5 provides additional information on Offer versus Serve with Food-Based Menu Planning, including how to count items for reimbursable meals.



## 7. Offer versus Serve for Breakfast

- **What is the goal of OVS for breakfast? How does it work? Are any schools required to have OVS for breakfast?**

The goal of OVS for breakfast is the same as for lunch. However, there are important differences in the way it works. For example, while senior high schools are required to have OVS for their lunch programs, it is optional for breakfast. It is also optional for schools serving younger students.

*Here's how it works:*

- Students must be offered all four required food items:
  - One serving of Milk
  - One serving of Juice/Fruit/Vegetable
  - Two servings of Meat/Meat Alternate  
OR two servings of Grains/Breads  
OR one serving of each
- The serving sizes must equal the minimum quantities required by age/grade group.
- Students may refuse one food item from any component.
- The breakfast must be priced as a unit. In other words, the charge for the meal is the same whether or not a student chooses to decline a food item.

For an OVS meal to qualify as reimbursable, it must contain certain combinations of foods. Menu planners need to make sure cashiers and students can identify at the “point of service” which combinations of food items qualify as a reimbursable meal.

For additional information, see Appendix 5.



## 8. Standardized Recipes

### ■ Are standardized recipes recommended for Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning? Where can you get standardized recipes for school meals?

Standardized recipes are an important management tool in any food service program. They are highly recommended for planning meals with Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning. On a daily basis, they help ensure consistent quality and quantity.

In addition, when state agency representatives analyze menus to check for compliance with the nutrition goals, they will need to know which recipes were used and have copies of those recipes. This is easier when standardized recipes have been used.

Standardized recipes and preparation techniques should be used for all menu items that have two or more ingredients or that require any preparation.

The chart in Appendix 1 states the following for Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning:

- *A record and copy of recipes used must be available during state nutrition review and analysis.*

Sources of standardized recipes include the following. These are listed with additional information in Appendix 3:



- *USDA Quantity Recipes for Schools*
- *A Tool Kit for Healthy School Meals: Recipes and Training Materials*
- *The School Lunch Challenge I, II, and III Recipes*

Shown here are French Toast Strips with Spiced Apple Topping from USDA's *A Tool Kit for Healthy School Meals: Recipes and Training Materials*.



## 9. Processed Foods

- **When planning to use processed foods, such as brand-name products, will you need to have nutrition information? How can you get this information?**

In order to plan meals using Food-Based Menu Planning, you will need to know what a particular product contributes to meal pattern requirements. In addition, in order to plan breakfasts and lunches that meet the appropriate nutrient standards, you will want to know what individual foods contribute to a healthful meal. Reading nutrition labels or information sheets from manufacturers is a good way to start. You will need to have this information on hand for the nutrition assessment done by your state agency.

When you are using processed foods, it is especially important to have nutrition information for particular products. This is because similar items can be very different, even if they have the same name. For example, one manufacturer's ravioli may have twice the amount of saturated fat as another's, and there can be other significant differences, too.

Besides reading product labels, how else can you get the information you need? Even if you have chosen to use Traditional or Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning instead of Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP) or Assisted NSMP, you may want to obtain a copy of the USDA-approved NSMP software. Built into this software is the Child Nutrition Database (CN Database).

The CN Database contains files that list food items and nutrients. For example, you will find information on:

- Reference foods commonly used by schools
- USDA commodity foods
- USDA quantity recipes for school food service
- Brand-name processed foods used in schools
- USDA's *Food Buying Guide*

These files are "locked" in order to keep them accurate and reliable. This means you can see and use what is in them but cannot add, delete, or alter any information. You can, however, open up and work with the empty files that the software also includes. These allow you to develop a local database of foods you use that are not already in the database.

If you plan to offer a food item but do not find it listed in the CN Database, you can obtain the nutrient analysis from the product's food label or by contacting the manufacturer. You can then enter the information into your local database.

Foods that are included in the reference foods of the CN Database, such as basic condiments, canned vegetables, fruits, etc., can be used without obtaining brand-name analysis.



## 10. Production Records

### ■ Are production records required for Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning?

The chart in Appendix 1 states:

*Program regulations require schools to keep food production and menu records.*

Production records are valuable management tools. You will want to keep records of:

- Menus
- Product specifications
- Recipes and preparation methods
- Projected production of menu items
- Number of reimbursable meals served

See Chapter 7 for sample production records.



## 11. Child Nutrition Labeling

### ■ Does the Child Nutrition Labeling Program apply to Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning?

The Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program applies to both Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning. This is because CN labels on products show the product's contribution toward meal pattern requirements.

CN Labeling *does not* apply to NSMP or Assisted NSMP because these menu planning systems do not use meal patterns as planning tools. However, CN-labeled products may be served in meals planned with NSMP or Assisted NSMP.

For more information on CN labeling, see Appendix 6.

